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CALIFORNIA. BUREAU OF
VENEREAL DISEASES
INSTRUCTION FOR MOTHERS

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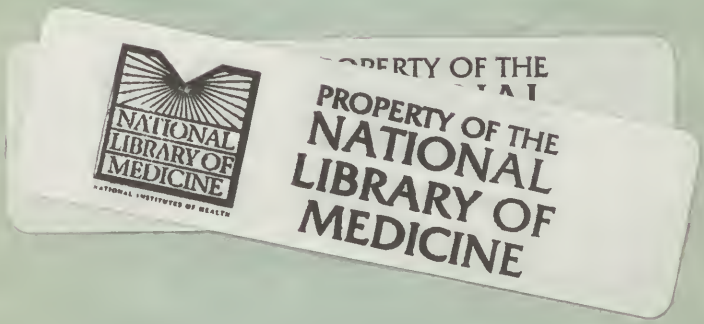

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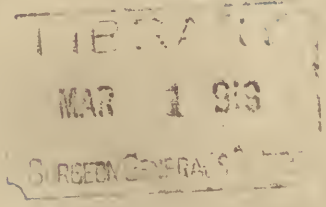
CALIFORNIA STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

INSTRUCTION FOR MOTHERS ON TEACHING GIRLS THE LAWS OF SEX



Republished by

The Bureau of Venereal Diseases

California State Board of Health

Through the Courtesy of

California Social Hygiene Society

CALIFORNIA STATE PRINTING OFFICE
SACRAMENTO
1918

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FOREWORD.

TO MOTHERS.

We believe that it is your duty to teach your child, boy or girl, at home, the facts of reproduction. This knowledge the child will get, and as parents you should see to it that the truest and purest things are said to your child, boy or girl, by you before the mind is permeated by wrong impressions gained on the street or in school.

We urge on you as parents, fathers and mothers, that the confidence established with your children by frankness on these subjects of sex development and sex life and its culmination in reproduction will more than pay for effort and time spent in preparation.

We offer to you, as mothers, this circular, divided into two parts—the first part, "The Story of Reproduction in the World About Us"—believing that a girl from six to ten can learn these facts, and appreciate and understand the dual forces in nature and human life, and be prepared to understand her individual, personal development as it takes place. The second part may be given to the girl as she seems ready for it, to some by ten, to others by twelve years of age. It should be the basis of several talks by the mother, covering, as it does, general and personal questions arising at this time.

We urge you to answer, no matter how young the child, the question asked, as honestly as you can.

We wish to educate parents to realize that *ignorance, not knowledge, is dangerous.*

The question that sex hygiene must be taught is settled. When and by whom is less easily decided. As a mother, will you not take this duty on yourself and send your children out armed with the ideals you can give them, to meet life and the temptations which assail each one of them?

LESSONS IN REPRODUCTION FOR THE LITTLE GIRL FROM 6 TO 10.

Lesson No. 1.

Seed babies can be found in every seed and nut. Take dry beans and soak them a day, split them open and see the tiny plant curled up ready to grow. When the earth tucks it away in its warm bed, and the sun shines, up comes the bean and splitting it apart the green plant reaches up to the light.

Get an alligator pear seed and stick toothpicks in its sides and suspend it over a vase of water; stand it in the kitchen window and see the plant grow up.

Lesson No. 2.

When the blossoms come on the bean vines, or on the nasturtium or poppy, open the green bud and see the color leaves of the plant curled over the stamens and pistil and seedpod of the blossom. Show the open flower and the pollen dust on the stamens—and how the wind, the bee,

the butterfly, knock it off on to the pistil, which has a little tube running down to the seed vessel or ovary of the flower. The pollen makes the little seeds grow and when they are ripe, the pretty flower has withered and the pistil and stamens fallen away, and the pod, or nut, or apple, or pear remains with its seeds to give us flowers again. If you tear off the anthers or break off the pistil the seeds will never ripen.

Lesson No. 3.

You are learning of the value to our coast of the salmon, a salt water fish; how we catch and can them at certain seasons and ship them all over the world. The salmon mother fish, in the spring of the year, has her body full of eggs and she has the instinct to put them in a safe place, where they will hatch and where the little fish can swim about and easily find food. The rolling open ocean is not safe enough, so she swims up the fresh water rivers and far up to shallow parts, and there, where the water is warmer, she lays her eggs, and in the shallow water the father fish covers the eggs with a fertilizing fluid and they begin to grow. The father and mother fish then die and at the end of the season the little fish go back to the open ocean.

The salmon are caught on their trip up the river.

Lesson No. 4.

In the bird family we see a father and mother bird dividing their duties to the eggs. The mother warms the eggs, after they are laid in the nest, and when she leaves the nest for a few moments to fly around, the father bird takes her place. Each day he brings her food and sings and chirps on the branches near by the nest, and later helps to feed and teach the little birds to fly; before the season ends the bird family flies south to warmer lands.

You see now, that each bit of life, the flower, the fish and the bird, has this male and female division of the work of seed making, or hatching of fish or birds; that both are necessary and neither can do this work of reproduction alone.

THE AGE OF PUBERTY,

Or the Transition Into Womanhood.

This same division of work is the law in the human family. Each girl has in her body the organs of her part in reproduction, the seed vessel or ovary, and the nest or womb, or uterus, as it is called, in which the ovum, or egg, when fertilized by the male element of reproduction, lodges and grows, till it is born as a baby. In the human family this growth is a long process of nine months, and the baby is loved and planned for from the beginning, and for years afterward as the helpless infant, the toddling child, the school girl and the young woman worker in the world, loved, protected, taught, till she in turn is mature and ready to choose her mate, head her own home and care for and teach her children.

You see the circle is the same and the steps of life similar, be it flower, bird or man whose reproduction we study.

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To the girl in California the development into womanhood comes between 12 and 13 years of age. The girl grows taller, broader hipped, the breasts develop, the body is rounder, and with these changes on the surface of the body, there are other changes, mental and physical, going on. The organs which are concerned in reproduction later in life reach their maturity in these years, and a new function is established, which is called menstruation, and shows itself as a slight discharge of blood from the external genital or sex organs. This discharge, when once established, is regular in its occurrence every four weeks, and lasts three to five days. It should be painless, though many girls feel tired and dull for the first day.

The mental changes are quite as wonderful in the developing girl. She is shy, and no longer a child. She does not yet fit among older women. She is caring for beauty in herself and her surroundings, though not yet self-expressive. The girl begins to take an interest in pretty clothes, in doing up her hair, in having the company of boys. These are all normal sentiments and ambitions and are easily stunted and warped in the sensitive, awkward girl by allowing no expression in clothes, ribbons, her personal room, and above all, by teasing her about beaux and sweethearts.

The over-social and the self-repressed girl both need guidance and the help of mothers and friends. Company of the opposite sex is desirable and a clear idea of self-control and the allowing of no familiarities should be taught in detail to a girl.

It is a period of great adjustment and for several years patience and protection of a girl from undue nervous, mental and physical strain will do much to establish future health. The balance of mental work, exercise, diet, baths and amusements must be made carefully. Athletics, tennis, boating, golf, give social and physical development. If dancing could be dissociated from late hours, rich refreshments and the dangers of liquor and bad air, it would be ideal exercise. Muscle control and social pleasure and rhythm are never more easily learned. In dancing, many good people feel the stimulation of sex impulses is too great and that self-control is too easily lost for it to be a safe pleasure for boys and girls. A girl must be her own best judge here and not allow herself to dance exclusively with one boy, or allow what is included in "spooning" to begin. The power of helping her boy friends to be better for knowing her and her home is in the hands of every girl and her mother.

With the advent of this great war, a new problem presents itself to every mother. Her girl must be doubly protected against her own emotional reaction to the lure of the uniform and against the lad from whom the restraining influences of home have been removed. Each mother should know the companion and the whereabouts of her daughter and no girl should be allowed to wander unchaperoned in the neighborhood of the Army camps.

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